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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000625

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TAGS: MARR PGOV PREL IZ

SUBJECT: NSC DISCUSSES COMBATING AQI, SECURITY SERVICES
OVERLAP, AND DETAINEES TRANSFERS WITH SAUDI ARABIA

Classified By: Charge d' Affaires Patricia Butenis for reasons 1.4 (b)
and (d).

¶11. (C) Summary. At the March 8 National Security Council, Iraqi officials discussed the ongoing threat from Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), how to fix the overlapping duties across Iraq's intelligence services, moving ahead on a draft agreement with Saudi Arabia regarding prisoner exchanges, and avoiding regulations that could discourage foreign investment. Many decisions were deferred because Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki and the two deputy prime ministers were not present. The NSC agreed that the Interior Ministry should head the joint intelligence cells at Iraq's ports of entry. End summary.

AQI Still a Threat

¶12. (C) Interior Minister Jawad Bulani briefed the attendees on the March 8 suicide bombing at a Baghdad police academy that killed 28. The bombing targeted police recruits, he said, and demonstrated that "Al-Qaeda is coming back" to Baghdad. Afterward, National Security Advisor Muwafaq al-Rubaie briefed the group on an assessment written by five Iraqi intelligence services:

-- Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) will try to stay alive in Mosul and Diyala but will have problems with funding.
-- AQI will try to find new political groups with which they will attempt to merge, will seek support from Al-Qaeda in Africa, and will become less outwardly extremist to better blend into Iraqi society.
-- AQI will attempt to stir sectarian violence between Kurds and Arabs. AQI will target Awakenings and Iraqi government buildings.

¶13. (C) Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari predicted AQI will seek to portray the U.S. withdrawal from Iraq as a victory by launching more attacks as the withdrawal deadline nears. Iraqi government spokesman Ali al-Dabbagh said to promote distrust within AQI, the Iraqi government is publically saying AQI members are acting as informants for the government.

Overlap Across Iraq's Intelligence Services

¶14. (C) A presentation outlining the duties of the National Information and Investigation Agency (NIIA) -- an intelligence body under the MOI -- quickly widened into a discussion regarding the poor coordination and overlapping roles of Iraq's various intelligence services. (Note. Iraqi officials prefer the term "security agencies" because of the negative connotation "intelligence" has in Iraq. End note.) NSA Rubaie said Iraq needs legislation to deconflict the responsibilities of Iraq's intelligence services. Rubaie, Deputy NSA Safa al-Shaykh, and Counter-Terrorism Bureau Head Thalib Kinani agreed that all of Iraq's intelligence services are working on counterterrorism, causing too much overlap.

Defense Minister Abd al-Qadir Mufriji recommended that a "security agencies" bill be drafted, approved during a future NSC meeting, and sent to parliament. Basimah al-Sa'di, aide to the deputy NSA, suggested an executive order could clarify the matter. A decision was deferred on this subject due to the Prime Minister's absence. The NSC later debated whether the MOI or the Iraqi National Intelligence Service should head the joint intelligence cells located at Iraq's ports of entry. Mufriji decided without opposition that the MOI should lead.

Draft Agreement with Saudi Arabia on Prisoner Exchanges

¶5. (C) NSA Rubaie asked newly-appointed Justice Minister Dara Noor al-Deen to examine a draft agreement between Iraq and Saudi Arabia on prisoner exchanges. Rubaie said PM Maliki in October 2008 created a committee under the MOJ to vet the details of the agreement. MOJ Noor al-Deen said he had never heard of this committee. MOD Mufriji tasked MOJ Deen to forward the draft agreement to the Council of Minister within one month.

Auditing Investors Will Discourage Foreign Funds

¶6. (C) The NSC rejected a proposal to require an audit of foreign investments designed to determine whether external funds are supporting terrorist activities inside Iraq. Bulani, Zebari and Mufriji said such a law would make it more

BAGHDAD 00000625 002 OF 002

difficult for Iraq to attract foreign investment. Dabbagh suggested the GOI audit Iraqi contractors, not foreign firms. Mufriji again deferred a decision due to the Prime Minister's absence.

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